

# Christianity and Crisis

A Bi-Weekly Journal of Christian Opinion

21 1050

VOL. X, No. 9

MAY 29, 1950

\$2.00 per year; 10 cents per copy

## Ethics and the "Cold War"

**I**N a recent press interview that well-known and picturesque figure, General William Donovan, is reported to have said that in the phrase "cold war" the emphasis should be on *war* and that, being at war, "ethics are out." Perhaps since he was raising money for the fight against cancer, he might well have said nothing about it; but it is clear enough that he represented in a phrase the essence of much American thinking today. In this war against Communism anything goes: smearing characters, guilt by association, conviction without hearings, trust, not in truth but in suppression; and in our foreign relations trust not in our moral purposes but in military force; all in substance meaning that we meet Communism by using the methods which when used by Communists we condemn; all expressing the conviction that in war "ethics are out." In war, so goes the thought, morals no longer count.

But morals do count, because God still rules. Even in the last and most terrible of wars morals still counted. We are just concluding a great series of trials for war crimes; for starting war and for crimes against humanity during war. We condemned the Pearl Harbor attack on moral grounds. We would not as a nation (in spite of the wicked urging of some individuals) countenance upon our part a Pearl Harbor attack upon a potential enemy. We know that those who had to make the decision concerning the use of the atom bomb debated it on moral grounds and we know that to vast numbers of Americans the decision to make the H-Bomb was morally wrong.

Of course morals do deteriorate in war or in times of tension. Edith Hamilton in the introduction to her translation of "The Trojan Women" illustrates it from the Peloponnesian war. The Athenians early in the war sent orders that Mytilene should be destroyed and all its men killed, its women enslaved. The orders were sent. Then conscience began to work. Sentiment changed. A swift ship was despatched to revoke the order, and arrived in time. Twelve years later in the war, harassed, embittered, the Athenians executed the same destruction on another island town without a question. In two world

wars we have seen the same kind of deterioration. We have gone from the limitation of bombing to military objectives on to the atom bomb and now to a frank assumption that the H-Bomb and bacteriological weapons may be necessary. Moral standards do deteriorate in war. But morals are not out. The justification for these terrible weapons is always based on moral principles. God is still King.

We may also question the General's assumption that we are at war. The purpose of war is to achieve by force of arms some objective which cannot be achieved by peaceful means. The precise difference between what we call the cold war and real or hot war lies in its purpose. Most reliable evidence seems to show that while Russia is suspicious of our motives and is preparing on a large scale for a possible war, her real purpose is to further the Communist revolution by other means. It is certainly true that the American people generally and their administration very definitely do not want war. They regard the Atlantic Pact as an anti-war measure. Whether their judgment is correct is another matter, but there can be no doubt of the desire of the Government and the hope of the people that some way may be found to achieve adjustment with Russia. The Marshall Plan, Point Four, and a host of other official and unofficial projects, including at least the *intention* of making the United Nations a primary factor (in spite of Mr. Hoover) indicate the desire for peace. No, we are not at war; and the phrase "cold war" is unfortunate. We are working through a period of bitter tension, hoping and praying for peace. Our consciously formulated purpose is peace. Moral values still count. God still reigns.

But the most fundamental condemnation of the spirit expressed in the phrase "ethics are out," lies in the fact that the justification of our whole policy in the world today lies in its moral character. We have no other ground for exercising our power. We have disclaimed conquest; we have no intention of attempting to make the world an American colony. We are not imperialistic. Much in our American life seems to deny those assumptions. But one can say with unquestioned confidence that the real America does not want those things, and that the adminis-

tration, harassed and at times uncertain, represents that real America.

On the other hand what we do want is a world peaceful, because it is held together by mutual trust; law-governed, because only under law can liberties be preserved. We want a world which is definitely a free world; a world in which those liberties have right of way. Nor is it exaggeration to claim that we want *one world* although we are not very clear as to its definition. We want the kind of world towards which the United Nations looks.

What we really mean in these wants of ours is righteousness and justice and a chance for every one. What we really hate, in spite of our McCarthy's, our Mundt-Ferguson Bills, our weird legislative committees, is police-state methods, ruthlessness,

and the dogma that the State can do no wrong. We believe the individual counts. We believe in his worth before God. We believe that the State is or ought to be nothing but the citizens working together for the welfare of each and all. We believe in these things for the world as for ourselves. They are the moral values for which we stand, for which we have fought and for which we appeal to the world today. We would protect them for ourselves. We would protect them for others. If we let the moral values slip to achieve a momentary success, our foreign policy will fail; our mission will fail; that leadership which in the providence of God has come to us will be lost, for whatever we may do or think, God still rules and moral values do count.

—E. L. P.

## Utilitarian Christianity and the World Crisis

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

**A**N ironic aspect of the present world situation is that the more Christians seek to commend their faith as the source of the qualities and disciplines required to save the world from disaster, the less does that kind of faith prove itself to have the necessary resources. It is significant that a purely utilitarian justification of Christianity tends actually to produce a type of religious idealism which is more likely to become a source of confusion to the conscience of the nation than a spiritual resource. Christ admonished us "to seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness" and assured us "that all these things would be added." But if we place our main interest upon the things that will be added; if we seek to justify Christianity because it preserves democracy, or inspires hatred of dictatorship, or makes a "free enterprise system" possible, or helps us to change such a system into something better, or creates a "third force," our utilitarian attitude debases the Christian faith to the status of a mere instrument of the warring creeds from which the world suffers.

This utilitarian attitude destroys the real power of the Christian faith because it creates a type of piety in which there is no longer any genuine engagements between the soul and God, or between the nation and God, but merely a religious accentuation of various forms of ethical and political idealism. Even now many contradictory testimonies of various types of Christians in our nation tend to be either so irrelevant or so dangerous that a wise statesman will do well to ignore most of them; and he may well thank God that they cancel each other

out sufficiently to make this indifference politically expedient.

Consider our situation: We are involved in a "cold war" with a great power which is more than a mere political power. It is the "fatherland" of a political religion which has transmuted the prophets of a utopian faith into tyrannical priest-kings of a vast system of exploitation. The fact that the original Marxist utopian dream has turned into a nightmare has not, however, disillusioned millions of impoverished people in Europe or in Asia, who look to Russia as a kind of messianic nation. Most recently China has capitulated to this illusion.

Opposed to this great power, which is able to add to its military might, the weapons of political chicane and moral illusions, stands a vast alliance of "free nations." These free nations have an imperfect unity, compared to the monolithic unity which tyranny can create. They are also filled with various forms of injustice, economic and racial. The former are responsible for inciting the rebellion of the so-called "industrial" classes against bourgeois democracy, out of which the Russian power grew. The racial injustices in the free world have done much to incline the peoples of Asia and Africa to Communism. As the "head" of this vast alliance stands our own nation. We are in this position of leadership not because of our superior wisdom or virtue. We hold this position because of our great economic power. Yet the stability and moral health of the free world will depend to a large degree upon the wisdom with which our very wealthy nation can relate itself to an impoverished world.

We believe that our free society is worth preserving, whatever its moral and political weaknesses. It is locked in mortal combat with a tyrannically organized world. It is not certain either whether we can prevent further encroachments of Communism in our world or whether we can avert a world conflict between the two centers of power. Such a conflict would mean the end of civilization even if we had the strength to gain a victory for "our" civilization. It is fairly obvious that in the event of such a conflict atomic weapons would be used, including the new type of hydrogen bomb. Mankind has never faced moral dilemmas of such staggering proportions.

How are the Christian churches guiding the conscience of the nation in this situation? It is not quite fair, yet it is not unfair, to suggest that they are all too frequently involved either in adding religious fury to the hysteria or the self-righteousness to which an embattled nation is naturally prone; or in finding religious grounds for evading our duties in a hard situation. Catholicism is more prone to the former error and Protestantism to the latter.

One form which hysteria takes in a tense situation is the curious desire to invite the catastrophe which we ought to avoid. The political form of this hysteria is the doctrine of an inevitable war; from which the proposition of a preventive war is quickly derived. The Catholic Church does not believe in an inevitable war or a preventive one. But there are altogether too many Catholic voices which hint at it; and there have been no official disavowals of the idea. The hints arise understandably enough from the terrific conflict between Catholicism and Communism in the nations behind the iron curtain and the fear that Communism will do mortal damage to the church in those countries. The concept of a "just war" in defense of "Christian civilization" can easily lead to a moral justification of a final conflict with Communism. If such a conflict is inevitable there is no good reason for not choosing the moment most propitious to our cause for initiating it.

No one can guarantee that this conflict will not eventuate. But since Communism is not primarily a military but a moral-political force, one should have thought that the primary Christian emphasis ought to lie upon the moral resources by which alone we can overcome Communism, without of course relaxing our military defences against the military threats of the Communist world.

Catholicism tends to accentuate the self-righteousness of the advocates of our cause, thus contributing to the moral complacency which may be our undoing. When it wars against "secularism" the Catholic Church makes some pointed criticisms of the moral illusions of our bourgeois world. But when it wars against Communism it forgets these criticisms and speaks of our world, as a noted Catholic radio

preacher did recently, as "the fellowship of Christ" at war with the "fellowship of anti-Christ." Meanwhile Communism still spreads among the agrarian, rather than the industrial, poor of Italy, because there has been no genuine land reform in this Catholic nation.

Finally Catholicism has failed to check the hysteria in this country which expresses itself in the fantastic search for traitors in high places, when it is obvious to sober-minded people that this nation is freer of an internal Communist threat than any other democratic country. It would be wrong to hold the church responsible for the antics of an irresponsible Catholic senator any more than Protestantism should be held responsible for the demagogues who have corrupted our heritage. But the seriousness with which Holy Name societies treat the hysterical warnings of an ex-Communist Catholic is not reassuring. Wrote a wise American from France recently: "The antics of Senator McCarthy have done us great damage in France. The more astute French people feel that it proves that we do not take Communism seriously enough, that we do not understand its threat as a world-wide force. They find in these investigations a frivolous effort to reduce a tragic drama to the proportions of a cheap melodrama." The church has not spoken a single unequivocal word to quiet the hysteria expressed in recent senatorial investigations.

## II

The weaknesses of the Protestant testimony in the present situation are on the whole of a different order. The only Protestant words which are similar to the Catholic failings are those which aggravate the tendency toward self-righteousness on the part of a fortunate and powerful nation, by making it appear that the libertarian form of democracy which we enjoy is the final norm for a free world. This form of self-righteousness complicates our mutual relations with the impoverished nations of a free world, all of which have had to place greater checks upon the economic life than we, though many have given greater proof of their devotion to liberty and justice than we have been able to give.

Most of the Protestant mistakes arise from the tendency of the modern Protestant Church to equate Christianity with a system of rigorous moral idealism, without regard for the endless moral ambiguities in the political realm. Thus we confront the awful possibilities of a new level of atomic destructiveness and a nation in anguish of conscience asks: What shall we do? Many Protestant idealists simply answer: "Let us be Christians and not make the bomb at all." Very simple, except that a good Christian in Europe writes: "We hope that America's qualms of conscience will not prompt polices of defenselessness which will expose us to a Russian occupation."

We are involved in a "cold war" with Russia. What shall we do about that? The Protestant answer frequently is: We must come to terms with the Russians. As if that were a simple thing. We are asked to reach an agreement with Russia on German unity in the name of Christian idealism. But suppose the Russians will accept no agreement which does not permit them to dominate a united Germany? We are asked to reach an agreement upon atomic weapons. But suppose the Russians ask as the price of such an agreement a total disarmament which will leave them free to do in Europe what they will? Or we are asked to achieve the even more impossible goal of a world government in the name of Christian idealism? But we are not told how a world constitutional system would be able to beguile either side from the fear and mistrust which would wreck any constitutional system.

The simple fact is that Christianity as merely a system of rigorous idealism can be discounted by any statesman, even if he is only moderately shrewd. For his responsibilities teach him that there may be tragic conflicts in history which are not easily resolved either by moral suasion or by constitutional devices. (Do we remember our Civil War?) They also teach him that a statesman can never follow merely one set of moral values but must usually seek to realize partially incompatible goals. In the present instance this means both the preservation of a free world and the prevention of war.

If Catholicism were not so sure of the virtue of its "Christian civilization" and Protestantism not so certain of the efficacy of its moral idealism, if in fact both were less concerned to validate their faith as relevant to the present situation, that faith might be more relevant.

A less relevant faith would, as did the prophets of Israel, give our nation a sense that its primary engagement is with God and not with its foes. That kind of religious engagement, in which the distinction between the righteous and unrighteous nations (or in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, the distinction between the "circumcised and the uncircumcised") is obscured, is the only source of humility for a nation so tempted as our own to regard its fortune as proof of its virtue. We could have less friction with our allies and be a better moral match for our foes if our engagement with a divine judge helped us to recognize the fragmentary character of all human virtues and the ambiguous nature of all human achievements. We might also be helped to see that, what we regard as great generosity toward our poorer allies (as embodied in the European Recovery Program), is prompted not so much by Christian charity as prudent consideration of national interest.

A less relevant faith would have less to say about

overcoming race prejudice in order to commend our cause to the peoples of Asia and Africa. It would be more concerned to bring race pride, as every other form of human pride, under divine scrutiny. Racial bigots will not be converted by the warning that lynching may hurt our cause in Africa. They face a more serious problem in their own souls. They must literally be "born again." There are intellectual as well as religious resources against racial bigotry. But the church is primarily concerned with the religious encounter between an ethnic group and the divine justice and mercy.

The encounter between nations and the divine justice always wipes out a part of the distinction between good and evil men, and between just and unjust nations. But the Christian faith also helps us to understand the necessity of preserving, whatever standards of justice or virtue we have achieved, against tyrannical power. It does not persuade us that we must not stand resolutely against tyranny, because we happen ourselves not to be just in God's sight. It helps us to appreciate the responsibilities which even sinful men and nations have to preserve what is relatively good against explicit evil. Neutrality between justice and injustice, whether derived from a too simple moral idealism or a too sophisticated Barthian theology, is untrue to our Gospel.

The most important relevance of a Christian faith, which is not too immediately relevant to the political situation, is a sense of serenity and a freedom from hysteria in an insecure world full of moral frustrations. We have to do our duty for a long time in a world in which there will be no guarantees of security and in which no duty can be assured the reward of success. The hysteria of our day is partly derived from the disillusion of a humanistic idealism which thought that every virtue could be historically rewarded, and encouraged men to sow by the promise of a certain harvest. Now we must sow without promising whether we can reap. We must come to terms with the fragmentary character of all human achievements and the uncertain character of historic destinies.

There is nothing new in all this. Our present vicissitudes merely remind us of the words of Scripture: "If in this life only we had hoped in Christ we are of all men most miserable." That is an expression of what a humanistic age calls "Christian otherworldliness." It is the Biblical illumination of a dimension of existence which makes sense out of life, when it ceases to make sense as simply upon the plane of history as it was once believed. We are, as Christians, rightly concerned about the probabilities of disaster to our civilization and about our various immediate duties to avert it. But we will perform our duties with the greater steadiness if we have something of the faith expressed by St.

Paul in the words: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." In this final nonchalance about life and death, which includes some sense of serenity about the life and death of civilizations, there is a resource

for doing what we ought to do, though we know not what the day or the hour may bring forth. The best statesmen of the world may, or may not, have such a faith. But a statesmanlike common sense is a closer approach to it than many forms of religious hysteria or religious idealism.

## The Need for a Christian Philosophy

J. HARRY COTTON

THE confusion from which our culture suffers is at once moral and intellectual. The basic beliefs, rooted in Christian and Greek thought, that have given rise to our culture are all widely questioned today. This moral uncertainty grows out of our intellectual confusion, which in turn is fed by our moral bewilderment. We can distinguish between the moral and the intellectual, but we cannot separate them.

It follows that the church should proclaim not merely the gospel of moral regeneration. It has an immense and baffling task on its hands: confronting the thought of our time with the meaning of the Gospel. If we accept Emil Brunner's claim that the apologetic attitude marks the eras poor in faith, we deny that the Christian faith is relevant to the world of thought and we expose the church itself to the "acids of modernity" that eat conviction out of its life. To undertake the work of Christian apologetics is a sign not of the poverty but of the integrity of faith.

We should, therefore, welcome Alan Richardson's book, *Christian Apologetics*.\* This man stands in the center of biblical faith; he is richly informed in the history of his subject, and relies especially on Augustine's interpretation of faith in relation to reason. This is the deeply needed newer apologetic, which does not begin with human rationality and, assuming the validity of our human questions, demand that God answer them satisfactorily if we are to believe in Him. The older apologetic often ended in a denatured Christianity and it did not satisfy the demands of reason.

\**Christian Apologetics*, Alan Richardson, New York: Harper & Bros., 1947, pp. 249, \$3.00.

With this article by Dr. J. Harry Cotton, we are beginning a series of book reviews which are not intended to deal primarily with current books, but to call the readers' attention to a half dozen or a dozen books of the last year or two which have special significance.

In a subsequent edition Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin will review President Howard F. Lowry's book, "The Mind's Adventure."

Apologetics seeks to relate the Christian faith to the wider sphere of secular knowledge. It is not to be confused with "apologies," the meeting of particular attacks on faith. It is rather "a study undertaken by Christians for Christians" (p. 20), and is a preparation for the work of the apologist and Christian teacher.

The right of any science to exist is established by the valid use of categories that cannot be reduced to those of another science. The key category of theology is revelation and the work of apologetics is to justify the right to this category. The case for Christianity stands or falls with revelation.

The author finds a wide general revelation: the dim discernings of God's ways in other religions, growing insight into the demands of morals which are the "pressure of God upon every human life" (p. 125), and indeed in all forms of art as well as in the discovery of truth in any field of experience. These insights are not the work of unaided human reason and general revelation is therefore sharply distinguished from natural religion. Augustine had taught that all knowledge involves God's gracious revelation and illumination. Since all general revelation is the work of God, it yields a saving knowledge.

What then is the need of a special revelation? This question cannot be answered without an understanding of the relation of faith and knowledge. All knowledge employs a "faith-principle." There is a widespread view, often fostered by men of science, that the scientific method means emptying the mind of all "preconceived notions" and sitting down before an experiment and letting the truth form itself in an otherwise unprejudiced mind. The plain fact is that nature has nothing to say to such a vacant mind. She never answers a question until it is put. The very form of his question, the arrangement of apparatus for his experiment, his formulation of an hypothesis to be tested, are all marks of some faith-principle in the mind of the scientist.

Even the abstract sciences of logic and mathematics must start with postulates. How much more do the concrete "sciences" such as sociology and history rest on a faith-principle! Without some category of explanation no historian could ever be-

gin his work. His choice of a field of study, his search for a particular kind of data, show clearly that his mind is active in his search and activity without faith is impossible.

The stuffy pretense of objectivity, by which many men of science conceal even from themselves the most grotesque assumptions, needs to be exposed. Moreover each generation is subject to its own "ideologies," these hidden, seldom mentioned assumptions that underlie the sociology of knowledge, and which can be bared only by the most rigorous analysis.

In the same way philosophy must have its key category. The low estate of contemporary philosophy, when the prevailing "operationism" regards the grand themes of God, of being and of human destiny as meaningless questions, is an illustration of the frustration of reason without some guiding faith. Philosophy, in seeking to renounce all faith, has reduced itself to a study of semantics and to writing epistemological and logical footnotes for scientific treatises. Christian faith brings to philosophy the possibility of a recovered rationality. The very function of reason calls for special revelation.

Man's moral nature also cries out for light. Not only is conscience a universal fact, but the phenomenon of the guilty conscience as well. Apart from the Christian revelation man is possessed by a Gadarene madness that is driving him deeper into destruction, and that in spite of all his ideals and his scientific rationality.

Where, then, has the revelation taken place? Biblical criticism has destroyed the long-standing belief that the Bible contains an infallible set of revealed propositions. Richardson rather finds the revelation in historical events in the life of Israel, supremely in the life and work of Jesus Christ, and in the life of the early church. The revelation was not merely in the events, since many saw and did not believe, but in the events plus the prophetic interpretation, both being recorded in the Scriptures.

This special revelation is not a mere continuation of general revelation, as Book II of Euclid follows upon Book I. It is at once a fulfillment and a negation of general revelation. "It alters our knowing of everything we had thought we had known before" (p. 130), even as it involves a complete transvaluation of all our values.

But the revelation is not complete until it is received and understood. Richardson objects vigorously to the liberal belief that the Gospel appeals to man's moral and intellectual insights. Then it would become a mere extension of those insights and would cease to be special revelation. The fact is that many outside the church have moral, spiritual and intellectual gifts clearly superior to many of the sons of faith (p. 164). The inward illumination by the Holy Spirit is itself miraculous and Richardson

finds in this the modern equivalent of the argument from miracle. Without the miraculous element in the Gospel, "we have no powers in ourselves by which we might know it to be true" (p. 167). Revelation is essentially an opening of blinded eyes. It is not a blind believing. "When it comes, it receives fresh attestation in the coherence and rationality of the view of the historical facts which it enables us to see" (pp. 173-174).

The writer is not as clear as he should be on the nature of Christian faith. The whole Christian history testifies to the ambiguity of the word "faith." What he has to say of the "faith-principle" in science is to the point. He insists that for the philosopher, the choice of faith "involves the deepest levels of our being" (p. 37). But Christian faith is this and much more. It also involves personal encounter. Had the author explored the deeper meaning of faith, he would have been led to see that revelation cannot be separated from salvation, but ought in all exactness to be treated as revelation-salvation.

Richardson's claim that theology is an "empirical science" is unfortunate. His defense of this position in his introduction does not help. Theology's claim to be a "science" is surely not validated by the development of scientific biblical criticism in the nineteenth century. The question of the correct use of the word "science" is more than a verbal dispute. For if we are to distinguish at all between science and the Greek *episteme*, we must admit that both quantitative measurement and experiment are essential to the scientific method. The pathetically solemn claims of some of the social scientists ought to give us caution. Theology's claim to be a "science" is a plain concession to contemporary ideology and does not add to the dignity of theology.

The use of the word "empirical" is always dubious, especially when men equate the empirical with the "non-deductive," as our author does (p. 17). Any scientist who is at all familiar with logical analysis will say that his science is empirical in the early stages of some investigation, when experiments are largely exploratory in nature. But as the investigation proceeds, the science becomes highly deductive, especially in the formulation of laws. Most empiricism is a pretense and there is no good involving theology in such claims.

Fortunately the book contains its own corrective to this difficulty. For two successive years the reviewer has found this a satisfactory introductory text in a course on Christian philosophy and among students whose previous knowledge of Christian faith was very confused. Exclaimed one intelligent student, "I never really knew what Christianity meant before!"

#### Author in This Issue

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# The World Church: News and Notes

## In Defense of Niemöller

These extracts constitute the *gist* of an article received from Heinz Horst Schrey, S.T.M., Dr. Theol., in reply to a criticism of Dr. Niemöller by Professor Thielicke which appeared in our issue of March 20. Both Dr. Schrey and Dr. Thielicke have personal and theological influence within the Evangelical Church.

Was Thielicke right when he analyzed Niemöller psychologically and found that he belonged to a "reactive type" and concluded that the hour had passed when he was fit to be a leader in the church? Did Niemöller speak out of a nationalist attitude, as the former U-boat captain, or without a real knowledge of the political situation, or because he is a faithful pupil of Karl Barth? His unrestrained declarations of guilt, his inclusive confession after 1945, though he had been a concentrationnaire in Dachau, prove that he has left behind the nationalist complex. And a man who is in charge of the church office for foreign affairs can hardly be said to suffer from a lack of factual knowledge. There could also be more truth in the critical theology of history which Karl Barth developed when he saw Hitler in line with Luther and Frederick the Great and charged German Lutheranism for implanting in the German mind a lack of political initiative and responsibility and a subaltern attitude, than his opponents are ready to admit.

If all these attempts at interpreting Niemöller fail, what is to be said about the man and his statements? I am sure that his answer was more than just the utterance of a bad mood, an unfortunate aphorism put forth at the wrong moment. I believe the very scope of his words was not so much his emphasis on the reunion of Germany under an Eastern dictatorship, as his emphasis on peace and his refusal of a bloody war in which Germans had to shoot against Germans. Above all the prime issue is how to preserve peace and to avoid a new killing. Niemöller knows as well as any other German what Eastern totalitarianism means, everybody has read reports or talked to returnees from Russian captivity, nobody will yield to an *illusionnaire faible*. The question is no longer—and Americans don't seem to realize that in all its implications!—whether political freedom and a democratic way of life should be preferred over against a regime of terror. The question is whether a new war and the way it will be conducted would not extinguish life on the European continent as a whole, or would only leave primitive remains of fragmentary vegetation which no longer would deserve the name of life. The one who knows nothing but the alternative "terror without end" and "end with terror" speaks no longer as a Christian but as a nihilist. Niemöller certainly will know what he means when he values a nonbelligerent status higher than the totalitarian regime. He, to be sure, knows well that it would be a self-sacrifice for Germany, if she were united behind the iron curtain. Yet, not the reunion of Germany, but the preservation of peace is at stake. This preservation should be considered the highest good in the atomic age, since any outbreak of hostilities could be

the suicide of mankind. From this perspective the Niemöller statement comes out of a deep religious conviction: out of the comforted despair of a man who is living in a tragic situation and cannot withdraw from it, but who knows by faith about the deep realities which determine history. This faith tells him that on the one side any warlike conflict between East and West must be avoided, and that on the other side faith in the living God can give the power and strength to live even under a tyrant. The life-giving grace of God can much more vitally be experienced in the midst of the death of a doomed civilization. *Deus vivificat occidendo*—God vivifies by killing—this paradox of Luther's theology stands back of Niemöller's statements. Perhaps Niemöller was not aware of this theological implication of his statement the very moment he made it, it makes sense, however, only when seen on this background. This man has a right to be taken seriously, he is no political fool, but a Christian who has overcome the fright which for most Western Europeans a Russian advance toward the West would mean.

Dr. Schrey concludes by emphasizing that the position he takes has considerable support within the German church. He and many others suspect the much-discussed invitation to Germany to take her place within the European Council as based not on friendship but on a desire to have the Germans "take their definite stand against Communism." Many Christians will flatly oppose proposals for German rearmament; because any war fought with modern weapons will mean disaster for victors as well as vanquished, "we say 'No!' when asked to rearm."

## Berggrav on Hungary

A plea for understanding was issued in March by eight top leaders of the Hungarian Lutheran Church. Under present circumstances, the Hungarians asked their Lutheran "brethren in the West" to bear with them in patience. Salient passages follow:

"... The Hungarian Lutheran Church has... the responsibility before God of seeing that His Church lives on in Hungary in these days as a fellowship in the spirit of the New Testament, and does the work laid upon it by the Apostolic Commission under circumstances surely no more unfavorable than those under which the Apostles did theirs within the Roman Empire. We cannot, therefore, take it upon ourselves to start anything in the nature of 'church resistance', for we have to recognize in the light of the Word that certain aspects of church life as we know it are not part of the New Testament conception of the Church. . . .

"Never has the Word of God spoken in the Hungarian Lutheran Church with such fullness as it does now, and never has it been heard by so many. . . . Perhaps since the Reformation itself there has never been a time in the life of our Church when it has found itself so faced by reality of sin, or has so rejoiced over signs of grace. Under these circumstances, we would ask our Lutheran brethren elsewhere to look on us with more understanding, patience, love and trust, rather than in their inade-

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A Bi-Weekly Journal of Christian Opinion  
537 West 121st St., New York 27, N. Y.

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quate knowledge of our history and the conditions in which we are now living, to regard us with prejudice and judge us unfairly. . . ."

On April 19th Bishop Eiving Berggrav, Primate of the Lutheran Church, sent in reply the following open letter:

" . . . Brethren, it seems natural that a reply should be given to the letter in which some of the present Lutheran church leaders in Hungary are addressing themselves to all Lutheran churches in the world. Surely we Norwegian Lutherans know how difficult, yes, indeed, how impossible it is for those standing at a distance to understand just what is going on in a country where there is a revolution under a one-party system. But it is very difficult to abstain from judgment if one's heart is deeply engaged, as in this case in Hungary. Now, in their letter, the new leaders of the Lutheran Church in Hungary tell us that we, 'lacking adequate

knowledge, frequently regard them with prejudice and judge them with bias'.

"I am grateful for this opportunity of speaking frankly to those Hungarian Lutherans who have addressed themselves to us. As long as we are on speaking terms, and there is no danger of the connection being broken, my frank question to the Hungarian Church is this: When you tell us that we are lacking information, why did you not in your letter inform us as to 'present day conditions' in your Hungarian Lutheran Church?

"I take it that when you wrote your letter all of you were busy with the preparation for the new 'church' trial of Bishop Ordass. You knew that not only the Lutherans, but all the Christian world, eagerly looked for some explanation or information. In spite of that, you kept silent and in addition even accused us on the basis of lacking adequate information. What we may get to know about the aforementioned and quite unusual trial we have to pick up from other sources. Don't you see, brethren, that by writing us a long letter with 'the warmest brotherly greetings' asking us to act fairly, you are in this way accusing yourselves?

"You tell us that your Church 'has been judged by God' on account of its omissions, etc., for in decades past you have been interwoven with the then existing governmental system, because the Church was unable to 'resist the temptations' of those powerful systems, claiming on the other side that you *now* are free from such temptations. Don't you understand that by this you leave us in a state of bewilderment?

"The Lutheran Church also here in Norway has accepted with gratitude the fact you were pointing at, that the spiritual life in your Church seems stronger than before, but we also know out of experience that if at the same time a Church gets 'interwoven with certain social and economic (and political!) systems' in a way compelling the Church to keep silent on the law of justice given by God, then there is something not *true* in the very position of that Church.

"You can't help us by sending us nice Christian letters if you will not also inform us as to the complete truth concerning *your behaviour* as Christians. When you wrote your letter you were in preparing that 'special disciplinary judiciary commission of the Lutheran Church of Hungary' which only a short time later deposed Bishop Ordass. We were aware of those preparations when we read your letter and felt betrayed by you when you kept silent on this matter.

"Brethren! Surely we are one in Christ and in our Lutheran faith, but how can we stand together if you are not frank with us in matters of the deepest concern for our obedience to the will of God? . . ."—Ecumenical Press Service, Geneva.

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Our readers have, as usual, responded most generously to our request for names of their friends who might be interested in *Christianity and Crisis*. Thousands of names have been sent to us and this present issue will go to them. It is most heartening to receive such a token of interest from our readers.